



Food Safety

Have you ever had a 24-hour flu? Did you think it was something you ate? Very often what seems like the flu may be foodborne illness. Although anyone can suffer a foodborne illness, older adults are more at risk. This may be due to a lower ability to fight off infections. Poor vision and the inability to see spoiled food can also contribute to the problem. It could also be due to a limited budget and not wanting to waste food. Take this quick quiz to see how much you know about food safety. Answer yes or no.

Do you...

- Thaw foods on the kitchen counter?
- Leave leftovers out at room temperature longer than 2 hours?
- Forget to thoroughly wash off your cutting board after preparing meats, fish, and poultry?
- Marinate foods at room temperature?
- Take longer than 30 minutes to get your perishable groceries from store to refrigerator?
- Use the same platter for raw and gilled meats, poultry and fish?
- Delay refrigerating restaurant "doggie bags"?
- Stir and taste different foods with the same spoon?
- Use the same knife to trim raw meat or poultry and to chop vegetables?
- Eat hard-boiled eggs that have been unrefrigerated for more than two hours?

If you answered "yes" to any of these, please follow these seven tips to reduce your risk of getting a foodborne illness.

**Taken from Michigan Access to Services for Seniors

www.miseniors.net/whatwedo/health/

7 steps to home food safety:

1. **Wash your hands more often.** Wash hands in warm, soapy water for about 20 seconds. (Sing the happy birthday song twice. That's about 20 seconds.) Wash them before you touch food, after you use the restroom, after you cough or sneeze, after you touch garbage, animals, or dirty dishes, after you touch a cut or sore, and after you use the phone, touch your face, hair, body, and other people.
2. **Keep your kitchen clean.** Wash with hot, soapy water: kitchen counters, stove, microwaves, cooking utensils, and cutting boards. Wash dishcloths and towels regularly and throw old sponges away.

- 3. Keep raw meats and cooked foods apart.** Use two cutting boards. One to cut raw meat, poultry, and fish. And a second one for cooked foods, breads, fruits, and vegetables. After each use, wash with hot soapy water or place plastic ones in the dishwasher. Use different plates for raw and cooked meat, poultry or fish.
- 4. Cook food to proper temperature.** Germs are killed when food is cooked to proper temperatures. Buy a meat thermometer and use it! Put the thermometer in at the thickest part of meats, poultry, and casseroles. Put it in sideways for thin patties. Temperature should read a minimum of 165°F.
- 5. Refrigerate foods quickly below 40°F.** Put foods in the fridge right away. Don't leave leftovers sitting out for more than two hours. In hot weather, the time is only one hour. Check the temperature in your fridge with a refrigerator thermometer. It should be below 40°F.
- 6. Defrost foods in the fridge.** The kitchen counter is no place to thaw frozen foods. Germs grow best at room temperature. Instead, put food in a plastic bag or on a plate to collect any juices. Place food on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.
- 7. When in doubt, throw it out!** Write the date on leftovers and throw them out after 2 to 4 days. Read labels and follow "use by" dates on packages.

****Adapted from ADA nutrition fact sheet**

Call the FDA Consumer Food Information line at 1-800-FDA-4010 if you have any questions concerning food safety or check out www.foodsafety.gov and click on Consumer Advice. For more specific advice for seniors, read the following article from the US Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/sr2.html>. Short videos on food safety can be found at: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/vnrmenu.htm>.